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ACADEMY NEWS LETTER

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DR. RALPH W. CHANEY
PALEOBOTANIST

(See page 2)

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May Announcement

THE REGULAR MAY MEETING of the California Academy of Sciences will be held in North American Hall, West Wing of the Academy Buildings in Golden Gate Park, on Wednesday evening, May 26, 1948, at 8 o'clock. The speaker of the evening will be Dr. Ralph W. Chaney, Professor of Paleontology at the University of California; his illustrated lecture will be entitled:

ANCESTRAL REDWOODS OF CHINA

Nearly everyone has read the newspaper accounts of the flying expedition to China Dr. Chaney made this winter with Dr. Milton Silverman, science editor of the San Francisco *Chronicle*, to verify reports of a "living fossil"—*Metasequoia*. Very few have yet had the opportunity to hear Dr. Chaney tell in his own words of the remarkable discovery of living individuals of the tree—supposedly extinct for at least 20,000,000 years—which may prove to be the direct ancestor of our California Redwood. Because of this probable relationship, Dr. Chaney has aptly called *Metasequoia* the "dawn redwood."

California's Coast Redwood and Sierra Redwood, or Big Tree, only living members of the genus *Sequoia*, have long been regarded the sole survivors of a very ancient race of conifers which in remote geologic times encircled the lands of the northern hemisphere from the British Isles eastward across Europe and Asia to North America and Greenland, ranging as far north as Spitzbergen and as far south as Texas. At least twelve fossil species of Redwood have been recognized.

About two years ago, reports came from China of the discovery of three individual trees closely resembling Redwoods in a remote village of one of the central provinces. When actual specimens of leaves and seeds reached Dr. Chaney this winter, he recognized them as belonging to the previously described genus *Metasequoia*. But it was essential to verify this in the field, to learn the true nature of these trees, to photograph and measure them, and to follow up the report of a larger stand in the same region. Dr. Chaney and Dr. Silverman set out at once on the expedition that took them deep into almost inaccessible mountains of Szechuan and Hupeh, and the sheltered valleys where the "dawn redwood" has in a peculiarly favorable environment lived on far beyond its own age in earth's history.

It fell fittingly to Ralph W. Chaney to go, to see, to verify for science and the

world this startling discovery. Much of this paleobotanist's life has been devoted to the intensive study of *Sequoia*, its relatives and associates, living and extinct. He has searched out the fossil record in remote parts of the world. He found Redwood fossils in Manchuria in 1925 when he was with Roy Chapman Andrews on the Central Asiatic Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History. He and other specialists have gathered the data from widely scattered places that have enabled them to plot the once-great range of the Redwoods. Dr. Chaney's travels in search of fossil plant records have included expeditions to Venezuela and Central America.

The public is cordially invited to hear Dr. Chaney.

BROOKING TATUM EXHIBIT

THIRTY BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGRAPHS in color, the work of Brooking Tatum of Kelseyville, California, naturalist, lecturer, and photographer, are on exhibit in the Corridor of North American Hall until the end of May. These exceptional enlargements show California trees, wild flowers, and views in artistic compositions.

APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

NOTICE is hereby given to all Corporate Members that the Council at its April meeting approved the applications of the persons listed below for MEMBERSHIP in the California Academy of Sciences. If no objection to the election of these applicants be received at the office of the Academy within two weeks after May 24, they will be considered elected.

FOR REGULAR MEMBERSHIP

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